Interview with Professional School Counselor

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**Interview**

An interview was conducted at Cave Spring High School, which consists of grades nine through twelve, in Roanoke County, Virginia. Penny Williams is one of three school counselors within a student body of approximately 900. The three counselors, one of which is a coordinator, have specialized school counseling duties for all students; however, the caseload is distributed alphabetically. This type of distribution is preferred by the counselors as they feel as though they better know the students as they have them from year to year.

Mrs. Williams has the specialty role of career counseling with every student in the school. She has specific classroom lessons for each class, appropriately in learning about career awareness and options, interest assessments, work value assessments, and career exploration methods. In addition to this specialized role, she is also the school representative for the ACT, a national college admissions exam. In this role, she helps prepare the students and performs testing. She is also the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) tester at the end of the school year.

Among these many specialty roles with the entire student body, she advises, schedules and registers each student for required courses and electives. She schedules college visits for the students, assists in applications, and writes numerous recommendation letters. Among these many duties and responsibilities, she is working on academic, career development, and personal/social issues with her students, such as individual and group counseling on substance abuse, anger management, peer pressure, bullying, study skills, career exploration, goal setting, etc.

In regards to collaboration and consultation, she works regularly with other counselors, teachers, parents, instructional assistants, student assistance program (SAP) staff, nurses, and school psychologists, regarding her caseload of students. She also consults with her counseling peers, her coordinator, and the community in regards to issues which she may need additional information. These community consultants may be mental health facilities, substance abuse facilities, academic enhancement facilities, etc.

In discussing the specific services provided by their comprehensive counseling program, Mrs. Williams stated the services are based on need, depending upon incidents, observation, gathered information from surveys, confidential conversations, and student, parent, or teacher requests. The clientele of this Roanoke County school is mainly middle to upper class families; however, there are a few students who are transported from a local girls’ home, which typically houses at risk girls who have been in various socioeconomic environments of abuse.

One impression I received from Mrs. Williams was the positive support of the administration of her school. She indicated that the counseling office has very little non-counseling related responsibilities. The principal expresses to them an understanding of their monumental tasks and responsibilities and tries not to add to them unless necessary.

Mrs. Williams is obviously in the right profession. She has a wonderful rapport with her students and seems to have their trust. She mentioned that much of her job is rewarding in observing her students grow and develop into young adults. She also mentioned several times that she regrets not having more individual time with her students in order to become well acquainted with all and not only a few.

**Reaction**

The interview with Mrs. Williams was an informative one. She has a teaching background, which offers another perspective of the students. It wasobvious that the school counselors all tend to feel overwhelmed with the responsibilities of the job. The paperwork seems to be a challenge within itself. She mentioned the importance of documenting conversations and information, but equally important, she stated, is the content of what is documented.

Some of the questions in which I wanted to ask outside of the recommendations, related to parent cooperation. I asked about the difficulty of confidentiality with the parents, she stated that she merely explains to the parents that the students have her trust and she does not want to destroy that. This was a diplomatic way in which to remind parents of confidentiality, without sounding aloof.

In this interview as well as others with professional school counselors, I have left with the impression that one must be ready to roll with the punches and expect the unexpected. There is always a plan in place; however, there may be many ways in which to achieve the overall goal of meeting the domains of academic, career, personal, and social development of each student.